1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

The Mountains

133 [311] The legend of the rainbow in the rock does not err in speaking of Greece as a rock. Only one fourth of her area is currently or potentially of any agricultural use and lies mostly in valleys or plains near the coast, at the foot of mountainous slopes. The remaining three fourths of the land consists largely of precipitous mountains, ranging up to a height in Mount Olympus of about 9600 feet.[11] "Beautiful," says the tourist. "Unproductive," says the economic planner.

The Pindus range, reaching its way south as an extension of the Dinaric Alps from Yugoslavia, is most marked in Epirus but nevertheless extends on into Central Greece. A spine of mountains comprises the central part of the Peloponnesos; even Athens is surrounded by gentle Parnes, Hymettus, and Pentele. In Northern Greece the Rhodope Massive cuts through part of Macedonia and Thrace, while Mount Olympus rises majestically out of the Thessalian plain. This means that the rugged topography is not confined to one part of Greece but that peaks can be seen from almost any place on the mainland. Many islands, including Euboea and Crete, have their heights around which legends as well as clouds have gathered.

[137] Since there are no forests on many of the mountains, the landscape has an almost naked look when seen for the first time. But a longer stay in Greece accustoms one to the browns and grays and lavenders in place of the greens often associated with tree-clad mountains. Frequently at dusk the mountains turn to a deep rose and purple that seems magically unreal.

[132] Where there are mountains there should be water to irrigate the fields below or turn the turbines of power projects. Heavy rains and snows do fall on the summits, but since Greece is only 171 miles across at its widest part (Epirus-Thessaly), and since the mountain divide cleaves the center, there is not much space in which rivers can find a gradual slope to the sea. They thus are short and swift, with a torrential character that poses great problems of flood, silt, erosion, and river control.

● 134 A village priest in Epirus described the erosion of soil by saying, half-seriously, that his fields grew rocks. When asked how this could be, he replied, "I went out and plowed my field, plowing around two rocks that stood only slightly above the ground. I put in my seed; the rains came. After the first rain I noticed that the rocks had grown farther above the soil; after the second rain they had grown even more. So I knew that my fields grew rocks rather than grain."

137 185 [311] [293] [175] Where there are mountains there should be forests. But before the war Greek forests covered only about 19 percent of the total area of the country. Once they were larger in extent. Constantine Nevros, in an article in *Soil Conservation*, holds the goat primarily responsible for the destruc-

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

tion of the forests, but points out that even in classical times portions of Greek forests were felled to provide lumber for the construction of Athenian triremes.[12] He dates the beginning of the serious destruction of Greek forests during the Roman invasion of Macedonia, when the Greeks lost their fields in the fertile plains and took refuge in the mountains where they were forced to become stock breeders. Other writers fix the most serious destruction at the time of the Greek war of independence, beginning in 1821, when large tracts of forest were burned. This form of devastation has continued ever since, either to clear land for cultivation or to encourage the growth of young palatable shoots which are attractive to stock. An example of what warfare can do is the cutting down of the trees on Mount Parnes, near Athens, and other places during World War II by the Germans pursuing guerrillas and by Athenians in need of fuel.

The remaining land area of Greece which is not arable and not in forest, certainly over 50 percent, is either in scrub oak or is open rocky range, a fact which makes sheep and goat raising an important branch of the economy.

Where there are mountains there should be useful minerals. Greece does have a variety of mineral deposits, including some iron ore of high content, iron pyrites, emery, copper, zinc, lead magnesite, chromite, and lignite. An American company is now exploiting a fairly large deposit of asbestos south of Kozane. There is no coal, but much more extensive use could be made of the "brown coal," or lignite, to reduce or eliminate the heavy import of coal. Even if the resources listed here, as well as others not touched upon, were fully utilized, Greece would still compare unfavorably with most other countries.

These barren, colorful mountains modify the climate.[13] We often tend to think of Greece as having a Mediterranean climate, mindful of its similarity to Florida or California. Actually, what is called a Mediterranean climate — a hot, dry, cloudless summer, frequent north winds, and a mild, rainy, cloudy winter — prevails over only a small portion of Greece, such as the eastern coast of the Peloponnesos, Central Greece and Euboea, Crete and the Aegean Islands. The map of rainfall shows this clearly. On the western side of the Peloponnesos there is a modified Mediterranean climate with much heavier rainfall. Much of Greece, however, has a modified Continental climate with cold winters and hot, usually dry, summers. These conditions of extreme alternations in Thessaly, Central and Eastern Macedonia, and Thrace favor the growing of cereals. The dry areas of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, with soils low in humus, are centers for the growing of the small-leaved Oriental or Turkish tobacco.

What is surprising is the prevalence of an Alpine climate, due to the high altitudes, throughout the Pindus area and the higher parts of the

2:Friedl E-5 (1955-1959) 1963 EH1 Greece EH1
Vasilika

The Area Surrounding Vasilika

241 [621] [361] [423] The inhabitants of Vasilika, as the village will henceforth be called, are farmers and shepherds. The farmers cultivate the land in the plains adjacent to the low-lying ridge on which most of the houses are built. As a consequence of the dowry and inheritance system in the region, some of the fields near Vasilika are owned by farm families in neighboring villages, and the Vasilika farmers own some lands in other sections of the Boeotian plain and even in the surrounding foothills. By and large, however, the inhabitants cultivate lands of the [133] [134] quality characteristic of the Boeotian plains. These lie in East Central Greece, north and west of the smaller plains of Attica. The flat land of Boeotia is one of Greece's few regions of moist, fertile soil. The Kiphisus river once flowed through the whole area, but earth movements and the porous limestone of the region, which permits underground drainage, have broken the continuity of the river's flow. The upper stream flows through a narrow mountain-bordered valley and then into a wide plain which was once covered by Lake Copais. The river is silt-laden, and the underground channels through which the water escapes tend to get blocked up. The land can not always absorb the waters of the winter rainy season as rapidly as they accumulate. Thus an especially wet winter can flood the fields so badly that they do not drain off in time for spring planting [312] (Newbigin 1949:333). A system of controlling the waters exists for the land reclaimed by draining Lake Copais. However, the cultivated fields of Vasilika lie some miles past this region, and although the Kiphisus flows through their fields, the farmers have no method of draining off excess water. Consequently, [134] they watch the winter rains with some apprehension. On the other hand, the regular winter flooding in ordinary years, along with the accumulation of alluvium enriched by humus, makes the soil suitable for two crops of wheat annually and for summer crops such as cotton and tobacco (Newbigin 1949:333).

241 312 [406] Since the growing season for these last two crops is a dry one, the cotton always requires irrigation and the tobacco sometimes does. The natural underground drainage system makes it possible to drill good wells almost anywhere in the fields, from which water may be drawn by diesel irrigation pumps. Many such wells have been dug and are serving Vasilika's farmers. Within the village itself there are nine wells in regular use. Only an unusually dry year brings any danger of serious water shortage for either ordinary household purposes or for [363] irrigation. The mulberry trees which line the main village street and the occasional trees which appear here and there among the houses flourish because of the good water table and, in spring and summer, provide a pleasing contrast of dark green to the predominantly brown and orange tones of the village's land and houses.

49 621 361 182 The people of Vasilika, like those on the other plains of Greece, not only have the advantage of larger tracts of more fertile soil but also are considerably less isolated than the inhabitants of the mountain villages. As will be seen,

/5 cont./

The nearest railroad station is 3 kilometers from the village. The area is rather flat, sloping gradually as we progress towards the North East. The whole valley where the village lies is surrounded by small rolling hills that form numerous deep gulleys. Due to the lack of vegetation on those hills erosion has been going on for years and very often the fields are flooded down into the valley. The unceasing wars in this area, starting with the Balkan wars and ending with the First World /6/ War, stripped the hills of all trees and shrubs that could protect the soil and prevent the floods. One finds numerous dry fountain springs at the foot of the hills which were built by the people who passed on long ago. With the disappearance of the vegetation on the hills the water disappeared too. There is a small brook that runs North East of the village which quenches the thirst of the village cattle and the numerous flocks of sheep, and serves as a bathing place for the water buffaloes.

The flat land forms an alluvial valley, which has been formed from the deposition of soil by the continuous erosion of the nearby hills. The average elevation from the sea level is 90 meters. In general the soils of the area are 40% sandy clay red soils and 60% clay pyritic. These soils are made up from the surrounding rock formations. In general the depth of the cultivated soil is not more than 25 centimeters and very compact. The sub-soil is sandy clay and does not conserve the moisture. The fertility of these soils is depleted due to continuous farming for many centuries of the organic material and nitrogen.

The climate is very dry and hot in the summer months with plenty of rain during the winter months and occasionally snow. The seasons of the year follow each other /7/ abruptly and not uniformly. This of course has harmful effects on the growth and germination of the plants and hinders the diversification of farming.

The railroad station close to the village enables the village to get to the big trading city of Salonica. This good location

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